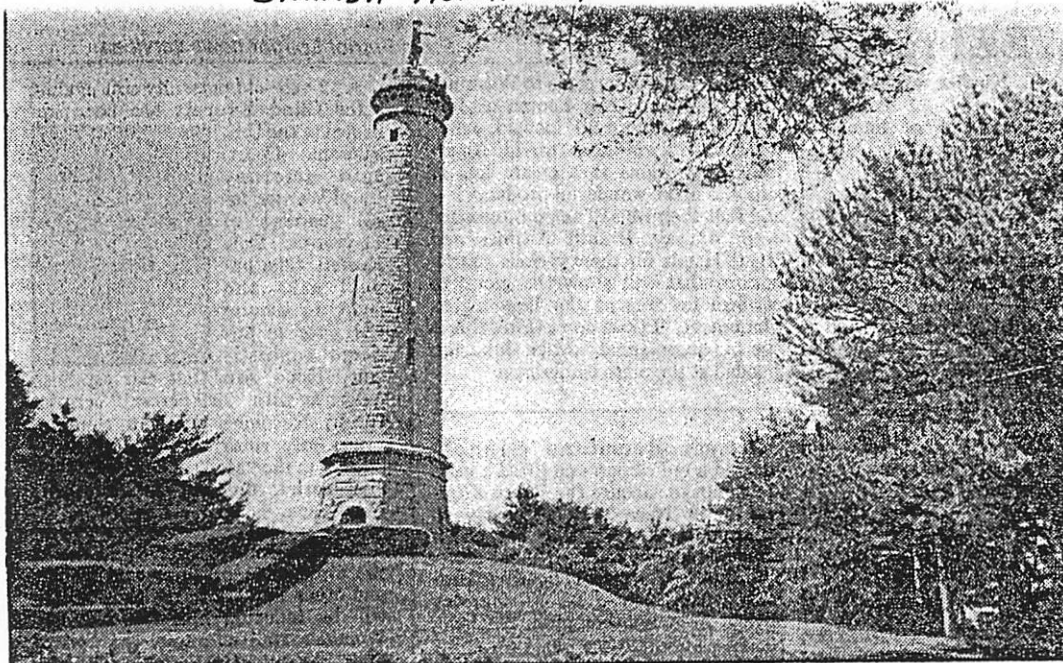


STANISH MONUMENT



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Staff photos by Jerry McCullough

The monument in Myles Standish State Park in Duxbury will be closed to tourists this summer because of an unsound inside staircase. Local residents are appealing to the state to make repairs before summer's end.

Standish monument closed; teacher seeks timely repairs

By Barbara Polichetti
Patriot Ledger Staff

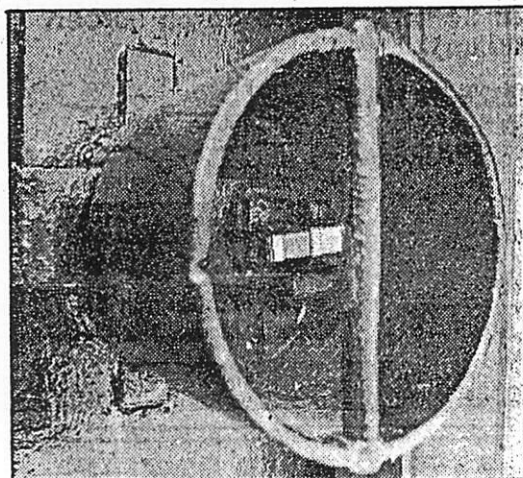
DUXBURY — It's Myles Standish's 400th birthday, but it doesn't look like the landmark monument built in his honor will be part of the celebration.

State officials who oversee the hilltop monument and surrounding 30 acres of parkland said this week the 110-foot tower will not be open to tourists this summer because its interior spiral staircase is no longer sound.

The closing has touched off a surge of public affection for the medieval-style tower, from which a 14-foot statue of Captain Standish surveys the slate-blue water of Duxbury Bay.

More than 60 area residents have signed a petition that asks the state's forest and parks division to repair the 125-step staircase before summer's end. The Duxbury elementary school teacher who began circulating the petition this week said she would continue collecting signatures.

"We just want the state to know that we'd really like it opened as soon as they can," said Dianne Hearn, a teacher at Alden Elementary School.



Padlock on the door of the Standish monument overlooking Duxbury Bay.

The Duxbury Rural and Historical Society, which this week opened a special exhibit in honor of the 400th birthday of Duxbury's founder, also is joining in the effort.

The society plans to send a letter to the state urging the reopening of the monument, exhibit organizer Ladd MacMillan said.

"It's a very historic site, so we are making an effort (to save it)," he said. "Children love to go up there, and teachers bring their classes their by the busloads."

The society's Myles Standish exhibit will be on display at the King Caesar House Museum through the end of the summer, MacMillan said.

John Grant, assistant chief for the state division of forest and parks, this week said salt air and age have corroded the monument's metal staircase.

Concern over the safety of the spiral steps has prompted periodic closings of the tower in the past couple of years, he said.

The parks department has budgeted \$300,000 for the tower's repair, Grant said. But there are dozens of parks and monuments statewide awaiting maintenance, and he said he did not know when workers will get to South Duxbury.

"We only have 'x' amount of people, and we've got to go to the (parks) that serve the most people," Grant said.

By state standards, the Myles Standish monument and park, which last year drew about 19,000 visitors, is a low-attendance site, Grant said. Parks considered popular attractions include Concord's Walden Pond, which last year drew 700,000 tourists, he said.

Standish gained fame as a Pilgrim soldier. As first captain of New England, he was known as the "guardian of the colony." He established Duxbury in the name of one his ancestral estates in England.

Completed in 1899, the Standish monument rises from the dome of 190-foot-high Captain's Hill. From the tower's top, visitors get a sweeping view of the coast from Boston to Provincetown.

The six acres surrounding the park that have been cleared and groomed for strolling and picnicking will remain open this summer, Grant said.

Hearn said the tower and park have served as a special spring field trip for her first- and second-graders for the past 10 years.

"It's such a lovely place to go," she said. "I simply assumed it would always be there."